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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines trends and issues related to the identification and recruitment of migrant children and youth for the Migrant Education Program (MEP). The MEP is federally funded and implemented by the states. Requirements and definitions of student eligibility and the functions of state MEP programs are spelled out in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind Act. To meet these requirements, states have devised varying methods of student identification and recruitment (ID&R). While not all states have taken a strong initiative in ID&R, five trends show great promise: (1) increased interstate and intrastate communication and resource sharing; (2) detailed clarification of eligibility criteria by the U.S. Office of Migrant Education; (3) more flexible application and reporting mechanisms for federally funded programs, which encourage local school-based and district ID&R innovations; (4) streamlined processes to target students most at risk of not achieving content and performance standards; and (5) increased technical assistance and training, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and made accessible to more people by new communications technologies. The knowledge and skills needed by successful recruiters are briefly listed, and several models for ID&R operations and administration are described, based on their locus of control: ID&R focused on a whole state, a region of a state, or a community, or external systems supporting any such efforts. (SV)

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CHAPTER 3

Identification and Recruitment: Trends and Issues

BY SUSAN DURÓN

This chapter examines trends and issues related to the identification and recruitment (ID&R) of migrant children and youth. Five trends show promise for expanding ID&R and enhancing the knowledge and skills of recruiters, who are responsible for connecting migrant families with school and community resources. The chapter also presents models for statewide, regional, and locally focused ID&R.

Background

Given the vital importance of ID&R in the overall scheme of migrant education, it is not surprising that federal, state, and local agencies have regulated and closely monitored the legal requirements and definitions of eligibility. The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the No Child Left Behind Act, spells out specific information on establishing student eligibility for the Migrant Education Program (MEP). The Act states that a child or youth is eligible for migrant education services if she or he

- is younger than 22 (and has not graduated from high school or does not hold a high school equivalency certificate), ***but*** if the

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child is too young to attend school-sponsored educational programs, is old enough to benefit from an organized instructional program; *AND*

- is a migrant agricultural worker or a migrant fisher OR has a parent, spouse, or guardian who is a migrant agricultural worker or a migrant fisher; *AND*
- performs, or has a parent, spouse, or guardian who performs, qualifying agricultural or fishing employment as a principal means of livelihood; *AND*
- has moved within the preceding 36 months to obtain, or to accompany or join a parent, spouse, or guardian to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work; *AND*
- has moved from one school district to another; OR in a state that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; OR resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity.[1]

The Improving America's Schools Act, the 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA, appropriately described ID&R as a cornerstone of the MEP. State education agencies are responsible for actively ensuring this cornerstone is solidly in place. Under Section 1304 of the act, each state agency ***must*** perform the following functions:

- determine the number of migrant children residing in the state and the areas of the state to be served
- identify and address the special educational needs of migrant children, including preschool migrant children, as outlined in a comprehensive plan for needs assessment and service delivery
- assure the delivery of services according to needs-based priorities that consider educational interruption
- determine the most effective types of services that respond to

[1] *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, U.S. Code* 20, § 1309 (2002), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg8.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003).

> the special educational needs of migrant children and that assist them in meeting the same challenging state content and performance standards *all* children are expected to meet[2]

Each state's approach to these daunting responsibilities is influenced by local needs and local control. The differences are reflected in the variety of state plans, comprehensive needs assessments, program applications, and procedures and documents for verifying eligibility. For example, some states hire a statewide recruiter, other states charge local operating agencies with carrying out this function using MEP funds, and yet other states do both. Some states cluster local projects into a regional network to share the costs of ID&R and the benefits of a regional service center.

State ID&R practices have evolved in response to changing demographics and fluctuations in migration patterns, availability of qualified and trained personnel, competition among states for migrant education program funds, expanded or narrowed interpretation of student eligibility requirements, and shifting priorities of state and district administrators who administer a number of different federally funded programs. Complicating this evolution are the substantial staff turnover, restructuring, and resource depletion experienced routinely by state departments of education. Any number of these conditions can jeopardize the system, resulting in eligible migrant students being passed over during ID&R. While not all states have taken a strong initiative in ID&R, a number of trends show great promise.

Trends in Identification and Recruitment

In spite of the many stresses placed on school systems, some promising trends should keep ID&R in balance as a strong support for the MEP:

- increased communication and interstate and intrastate resource sharing
- detailed clarification of eligibility criteria
- greater flexibility to support local school-based and district ID&R

[2] *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994*, Public Law 103-382, § 1304 (1994), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA/sec1304.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003).

innovation, coupled with greater responsibility for student performance

- more-streamlined processes that target those students most at risk of not achieving content and performance standards
- increased technical assistance and training on ID&R

Increased communication and resource sharing. Clearly, communication about the need for and ways to improve ID&R has expanded over the past several years, resulting in processes that enable the recruitment of larger numbers of eligible students. Vehicles that facilitate communication and interstate/intrastate sharing of information have proven to be viable tools (e.g., the National Migrant Education Hotline operated by ESCORT and the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at http://www.ed.gov). National conferences, such as the National Migrant Education Program Conference, dedicate time to allow recruiters to share information. The National Identification and Recruitment Forum is designed specifically for recruiters, recruitment coordinators, and other staff who recruit migrant students. Because budget constraints often prohibit more than one staff member from attending these conferences, those who do attend must communicate effectively and share materials with others in the field.

Clarification of eligibility criteria. As of 2002, to be eligible for migrant services, a youth or the youth's parent, guardian, or spouse must be engaged as a migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher. Further, an eligible migrant child or youth must have moved within the past 36 months from one school district to another to obtain (or for the appropriate family member to obtain) temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity. Initially, migrant eligibility was interpreted differently, limiting qualifying employment to a vague definition of eligible agriculture and fishing activities. Typically, conventional wisdom prevailed, as the states shared a common understanding of what constituted qualifying activities; however, the laws left many gray areas, subject to interpretation.

With the passage of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, the U.S. Office of Migrant Education (OME) began providing written guidance on student eligibility.[3] Subsequently, the OME defined specifics on qualifying employment for such activities as cutting firewood, stripping cedar bark, logging, operating mink farms, caring

for racehorses, unloading grain from railroad cars to make chicken feed for chicken processing plants, transporting milk from the farm to the processing plant, and fishing in coastal waters. In defining qualifying activities, the OME identified two constant factors:

- qualifying activities must be determined to be temporary or seasonal
- a migration of the target child himself or herself across school district lines in connection with qualifying work also must be documented for the child to be eligible to receive MEP services

During the last decade, the OME has initiated new programs and more detailed clarifications of qualifying activities in response to changing demographics and shifts in crop production. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education has sanctioned the alternative use of an industrial survey fashioned after a survey form first used in New York state for workers who performed specialized dairy work—a seasonal/temporary occupation with frequent turnover. The original industrial survey was expanded to document eligible qualifying employment in meat, poultry, and other processing plants in which workers are seasonal or temporary employees. While some states apply strict formulas to determine turnover rates based on the total days and total workers employed in a specific job, a number of states find the industrial survey to be a flexible and effective means for documenting temporary migrant employment.[4]

As migrant work evolved, or came to the attention of educators, new definitions were created to accommodate previously unforeseen circumstances. For example, due to unique situations in Hawaii, the Improving America's Schools Act expanded the definition of migratory child to include one who, "in a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district." It also expanded the definition to include a child

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[3]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance for Migrant Education Program, Title I, Part C, Public Law 103-382: Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1994), 36, http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP/PrelimGuide/title.html/ (accessed June 4, 2003).

[4]Kansas Migrant Education Program, "Plant Site Industrial Survey" (handout presented at the Kansas Migrant Child Education Program, Topeka, 1995).

who "resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity"[5] to allow for the identification and recruitment of eligible migrant students in the Pacific Northwest.

Flexibility to support local innovations, coupled with responsibility for student performance. More flexible application and reporting mechanisms encourage local school-based and district ID&R innovations. For example, the Consolidated State Application aligns all programs funded under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and consolidates administrative funds.[6] In addition to activities funded through the Basic State Formula Grant Program, the OME has funded consortium arrangements as an additional incentive for member states to work collaboratively on ID&R.[7]

Greater responsibility for student performance is reflected in a trend toward viewing ID&R in the broad context of a comprehensive statewide needs assessment, strategic program planning and implementation (including parent involvement, staff development, interstate/intrastate coordination, and other implementation features), and program evaluation. In the consolidated state plan or individual state application, each state provides a blueprint for meeting accountability requirements and pursuing strategies to improve student achievement.

Streamlined processes to target students most at risk of not achieving content and performance standards. Some of the activities designed to streamline processes for ID&R include flow charts and diagrams, basic sequential interview patterns for determining MEP eligibility, recruiters' tool kits, state-specific ID&R service directories, and "*how to*" manuals and publications such as the standalone booklet on identification and recruitment that comprises Section 2 of *Options and Resources for Achieving Credit Accrual for Second-*

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[5]National Archives, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 34, Vol. 1, Subpart C-Migrant Education Program, §200.40 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000).

[6]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Consolidated State Application for State Grants under Title IX, Part C, Section 9302 of the ESEA (Public Law 107-110)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2002), http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/CFP/conapp02.pdf/ (accessed June 4, 2003).

[7]*No Child Left Behind Act*, §§ 1301-09.

ary-aged Migrant Youth.[8] This publication was distributed nationally; however, processes and products most frequently are local, regional, or state specific.

Streamlining the processes and materials for ID&R has involved top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal efforts. From the top down, the OME annually sponsors an orientation meeting for new state MEP directors and a midwinter state directors' meeting, during which extensive materials are distributed to clarify issues and disseminate ways to best implement requirements mandating ID&R. Bottom-up grassroots efforts at the local and regional levels have led the way for migrant recruiters, educators, and administrators to share successful ID&R strategies and publish materials highlighting successful practices. Horizontally, interstate coordination grants with a focus on ID&R have enhanced understanding and cooperation by bringing states and programs together.

The U.S. Department of Education has promoted proper and timely ID&R of eligible migrant children and youth through *targeting*—i.e., identifying and focusing services on those students most at risk of not meeting state content and performance standards. Targeting services and an effective system of ID&R go hand in hand. At the National Recruitment Forum in 2000, U.S. Department of Education staff outlined strategies for effective targeting:

- the proper and timely identification and recruitment of all eligible migrant children, especially the most mobile
- the selection of students for services based on an assessment of their special educational needs in light of the "priorities" and the other services being received
- the provision of services at a sufficient level of quality and intensity so as to give reasonable promise for meeting the special educational needs of the students being served[9]

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[8]National Program for Secondary Credit Exchange and Accrual, *Options and Resources for Achieving Credit Accrual for Secondary-Aged Migrant Youth* (Edinburg, TX: Region I Education Service Center, 1994) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 368 532).

[9]Alex Goniprow, "Program Targeting an Effective System of ID&R" (paper presented at the National Recruitment Forum, New Orleans, 2000).

Targeting those students in greatest need is a difficult concept for many educators. Students who are more difficult to find and recruit must not be overlooked in favor of students who are easier to identify and recruit. For example, active migrants are more difficult to recruit than those who are less mobile; older youth are more difficult to recruit than their younger siblings; and out-of-school youth whose education has been interrupted prior to graduation may be the most difficult of all to identify and recruit, particularly when traveling alone.

Hard-to-identify children and youth may be the individuals most in need of migrant education services. ID&R strategies for hard-to-reach and out-of-school migrant children include the following:

- establishing the trust of the family through reliable and helpful assistance
- asking about older youth in the family and having information about services ready
- leaving packets of information about ESL (English as a second language) and GED classes with families
- recruiting in groups so families and out-of-school youth do not feel singled out
- seeking information from community sources to determine places frequented by migrant families (i.e., service agencies, faith-based institutions, businesses)
- seeking information at employment sites (i.e., from crew leaders, growers, shift managers)

Clearly, *how* to target and *whom* to target are skills that can be learned with proper staff development and training, strategic technical assistance, and resource and material sharing. Classroom teachers and administrators, support staff, and recruiters need specific materials and strategies to assist in identifying the students with the greatest needs; recognizing unique educational needs that result from educational disruption; and providing rich standards-based curriculum, instruction, and support services that span all grades from prekindergarten through high school.

Increased technical assistance and training. More than a decade ago, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned intensive case studies of migrant services. Local and state project personnel

reported two major activities that promote ID&R: (1) managing state or regional recruiters and (2) facilitating ID&R activities through technical assistance and training.[10] These activities persist 10 years later as key vehicles for ensuring a continued focus on ID&R.

To build on these two activities, the U.S. Department of Education regularly sponsors national ID&R forums, as well as the Annual New Project Directors' Orientation Meeting, with specialty strands for recruiters. With the expansion of these activities to include key regional contacts, the OME should ensure that its initiatives are available to local recruiters and other contacts who could assist state directors in disseminating important information about ID&R.

New and emerging technology makes ID&R training accessible to more people. One example was a week-long national online forum in October 2000 titled "How Can We Improve the Identification and Recruitment of Migrant Students?" Through a live real-time chat and an e-mail follow-up, participants shared ideas for better ID&R communication and identified professional development needs to upgrade ID&R practices and procedures.[11]

In response to an OME question on ways for state and local projects to reduce barriers to ID&R and strengthen solutions, participants at the 2000 National ID&R Forum expressed a need for continued opportunities to receive training and technical assistance. Suggestions focused on the use of more intensive electronic and print methods for ID&R training and technical assistance, more consistent regulatory assistance, and increased communication and advocacy.[12]

At the 2001 National ID&R Forum, the OME dedicated sessions to these subjects: "Hotline Live—Real Calls Showcase," "Keeping Recruiters Connected and in the Loop," and "Process of Developing an

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[10]J. Lamarr Cox, Graham Burkheimer, T. R. Curtin, B. Rudes, R. Iachan, W. Strang, E. Carlson, G. Zarkin, and N. Dean, *Descriptive Study of the Chapter 1 Migrant Education Program: Volume I: Study Findings and Conclusions* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, 1992) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 355 085).

[11]Susan Durón, "Summary and Trend Analysis of the Online Forum on Identification and Recruitment" (report submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, November 2000).

[12]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, *Notes from the National Recruitment Forum, New Orleans, Louisiana* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

Identification and Recruitment Handbook: Core Content Components." Town hall sessions offered an opportunity to discuss topics and issues that affect recruiters and learn about OME initiatives.[13]

Knowledge and Skills Needed by Successful Recruiters

Individuals responsible for identifying and recruiting migrant children and youth need considerable skills. Under statutory and state-specific requirements and regulations, a recruiter must (1) determine whether or not eligibility requirements have been met and (2) document eligibility on a Certificate of Eligibility (COE). To be effective, recruiters must be knowledgeable in the following areas:

- basic MEP eligibility requirements and services offered by the local operating agency
- local growers and fishing companies, agricultural and fishing production sites, and food processing sites
- languages spoken by migratory workers
- cycles of seasonal employment and temporary employment
- local roads and locations of places where migrants typically live
- workings of the local school system
- other agencies that can provide services to migratory workers and their families, such as the Office of Migrant Health, Women/Infant/Children—WIC programs, and Migrant Head Start[14]

Successful school districts have identified key qualities in recruiters, including experience, compassion, persistence, and an understanding of the migrant families served.[15] Recruiters need a remarkable array of skills to canvass the migrant community intensively; communicate with families, educators, administrators, and workplace decision mak-

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[13]ESCORT, "Forum Conference Guidebook" (National Identification and Recruitment Forum, Scottsdale, AZ, November 2001).

[14]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, *Migrant Education New State Directors' Resource Book* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2000), 6.

[15]Gerardo R. López, Jay D. Scribner, and Kanya Mahitivanichcha, "Redefining Parental Involvement: Lessons From High-Performing Migrant-Impacted Schools," *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 2 (summer 2001): 253-88.

ers; make complicated decisions; and maintain important records. Recruiters report being responsible for ID&R in addition to other duties assigned by local operating agencies: serving as home/school/community liaison, providing tutoring in the home, serving as advocate for migrant families, making instructional or support visits to the homes of migrant families, facilitating parent meetings, and serving as translator and interpreter for school staff.

Regardless of the multiple roles recruiters play, the U.S. Department of Education identifies their *primary* responsibilities toward the MEP to be (1) obtaining and interpreting information provided by parents, guardians, and others and (2) accurately and clearly recording information that establishes a child to be a migrant child in accordance with the current statutory definition.[16]

Models for Identification and Recruitment

Various models and combinations of models depict the structure of ID&R operations and administration. These models can be clustered based on their locus of control: ID&R focused on a whole state, a region of a state, or a community, or external systems supporting local, regional, or state ID&R efforts.

Statewide-focused ID&R. Some states—especially those with relatively small numbers of migrant-eligible students—hire a recruiter or recruiters who are supervised by the state department of education and who work out of the state office, an educational service center, or a local operating agency. The statewide-focused ID&R model has been helpful for states that operate newly created migrant education programs, that serve mostly rural or remote local operating agencies with limited resources, or that fund migrant projects clustered mainly near the state education agency location.

Regionally-focused ID&R. Regionally-focused ID&R has been useful in states with intermediate educational units such as boards of cooperative education services (BOCES), educational service centers (ESCs), or regional centers already in place. Recruiters are housed in the intermediate unit and provide services across district lines, thereby reducing ID&R costs to each of the participating agencies operating

[16]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance*.

migrant projects. Communication among regional recruiters is often more efficient in states employing this model.

Community-focused ID&R. The most frequently used model is community-focused ID&R. Local operating agencies are well positioned to know their local migrant communities, resources, and the education and support systems available to migrant families. This type of ID&R is particularly effective because the recruiter often lives in or near the community and has an established reputation of being knowledgeable about services, systems, and ways to connect migrant students and their families with resources. Especially in small communities, the recruiter is more accessible in this model, taking less time to respond and solve problems that arise for mobile migrant families who may be unfamiliar with the local area. When the recruiter visits the migrant family's home, place of employment, or the community center, he or she is well-suited to share details on education and support services, community-based ESL and GED classes, and contact information about local businesses and agencies. Some states, such as Colorado, combine the regional- and community-focused models, assigning most recruiters to local operating agencies but designating others to provide ID&R services through a regional network.

External systems to support ID&R efforts. A network of external service agencies provides coordination and support to local, regional, or state agencies that identify and recruit migrant children and youth. For example, ESCORT receives funds from the OME to operate a national hotline to help migrant parents enroll their children in school and in migrant education programs, if eligible. Hotline specialists at a central site or in the target states help connect migrant families with local ID&R specialists.

Examples of other external systems include regional or state consortia, such as the Florida Heartland Educational Consortium and the state of Kansas as the lead state for the CAIR multistate consortium arrangement. Each of these external systems channels ID&R resources to benefit local operating agencies.

Conclusion

The goal of ID&R is to ensure that all eligible migrant children and youth have access to appropriate program services that will help them learn and achieve to high standards. To accomplish this important

goal, recruiters need a clear understanding of eligibility requirements and their roles and responsibilities for ID&R. The keys to accomplishing this goal are increased communication and resource sharing among educators and service providers, greater flexibility to support local school and district innovations, greater responsibility for student performance, and more streamlined ID&R processes to target students most at risk of not achieving high standards.

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